

## A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT AND ADJUSTMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

By

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### ABSTRACT

*Self-concept and adjustment are two important psychological aspects influencing the personalities of individuals. The term self-concept refers to the individual's perception or view of himself. It refers to those perceptions, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and values, which the individual's perception of his abilities and his status and roles in the outer world. Self-esteem is another way of viewing self-concept. A person with high self-esteem has a positive self-concept while a person with low self-esteem has a negative self-concept. Life is a process of progressive adjustment and children should be stimulated to do their best. The aim of education is to develop the personality of the child, to make to adjust with the environment. If the adjustment is not proper it leads to maladjustment. The researcher made an attempt to study the self-concept and existing adjustment problems of the students with respect to their sex and type of school. Further an attempt has been also made to study the relationship between the self-concept of the learners and their adjustment problems. A normative survey method was used for the present research. A sample of 120 students of Warangal City were selected by simple random sampling technique. The study revealed that no significant difference was found between boys and girls in self-concept and adjustment but the difference was found between the private and government school students. The co-efficient of correlation between the students' self-concept and adjustment was found to be 0.70, which is significant at 0.01 level. It indicates that high scores in self-concept tend to accompany with low scores in adjustment and vice versa.*

### INTRODUCTION

Life is a process of progressive adjustment and children should be stimulated to do their best. Healthy interests, sound attitudes and a balanced hierarchy of values will enable the young pupil for proper self-understanding and this together with self-concept will pave the way for health and happiness, efficiency and success. If adjustment is not proper it leads to development of maladjustment.

Social psychologists have pointed out that self-concept plays an important role in social perception-the process by which we form impressions of others. Self-concept seems to play a significant role in the growth and development of a person, a detailed knowledge about its nature and its relation to other important factors of personality and provides an objective and encouraging basis for the educators and counsellors to work on (Arul, 1972). Personality development is a continuous process of interaction with environment. Adjustment means reaction to the demands and pressure of social environment imposed upon the individual. Hence the

adjustment involves the reconciliation of personal and environmental demands.

General interest in self-concept was declined while most self-concept theorists continued to write and conduct research during the 1970's and 1980's. After more than a decade of relative neglect, now self-concept is enjoying renewed popularity and attention by both researchers and practitioners. There is a growing awareness that of all the perceptions we experience in the course of living, none has more profound significance than the perceptions we hold regarding our own personal existence--our concept of who we are and how we fit into the world (Purkey, 1988).

Many studies in India have focused on the factors contributing to the changes in self concept; implementation of self concept in occupational choices; differences in self concepts of achievers and non-achievers in school, etc. Adjustment was also an ignored and neglected area in psychology and education for long, has now been recognised and plays a vital role in

personality development. It has been established by contemporary researches that the way an individual perceives himself shapes his behaviour patterns. It is necessary to study these factors from the psychological point of view as it plays an important role in education. The studies of this nature will help the teachers and administrators to know the probable causes for students' maladjustment in the institutions to develop a congenial environment.

As Arul (1972) argues, one could distinguish between adjustment within oneself (intra-personal) and with others (inter-personal). Achievement is referred to as bringing an effort to the desired end or the end gained. Since adjustment and achievement are two cardinal dimensions of a person's behaviour and since self-concept is acceptably a significant influence on behaviour, it was felt that knowledge of the relationship between self-concept and the other two variables would be very enriching and useful.

### Self-concept

The term self-concept refers to the individual's perception or view of himself. It refers to those perceptions, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and values which the individual's perception of his abilities and his status and roles in the outer world. It can be further explained that one's innate self is nothing but the self-concept. This concept is influenced by one's physical self, personal appearance, dress and grooming, by abilities and disposition, values, beliefs and aspirations.

Symonds (1951) defines that self-concept is the way or manner in which the individual reacts to himself. He explains the self in four aspects, that are: 1. How a person perceives himself; 2. What he thinks of himself; 3. How he values himself; and 4. How he attempts through various actions to enhance or defend himself. Purkey (1988) defines self-concept as "the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence".

Self-concept is considered to comprise various dimensions and areas of facets, some of which are more

related to certain personality aspects (physical, social, emotional), while others appear to be more linked to academic achievement. Strong (1957) described the self as having four dimensions:

1. Basic self-concept is the individual's perception of his abilities and his status and roles in the outer world;
2. The transitory perception of self is the self-perception that the person holds as a result of the immediate existing situation;
3. The social self is the self as the person thinks as others see it. It has an important effect on his behaviour; and
4. The ideal self is what the person aspires to be. It is usually moulded after one attains the adulthood, and childhood, is an important factor in moulding it.

Carl Rogers (1951) spells out some of the properties of self:

i) the self develops out of the organism's interaction with the environment; ii) it may intersect the values of other people and perceive them in a distorted fashion; iii) it strives for consistency; iv) the organism behaves in ways that are consistent with the self; v) experiences that are not consistent with the self-structure are perceived as threats; vi) the self may change as a result of maturation and learning.

The importance of self-concept stems from its notable contribution to personality formation. Self-esteem has to do with social competence, since it influences how the person feels, how he or she thinks, learns, values himself or herself, relates to others, and ultimately, how he or she behaves (Clark, Clemes & Beon, 2000).

People with good self-concept tend to be more accepting of others. They are also more accepting of their own failures. High self-esteem is related to independence and open-mindedness. People with positive self-images will be more willing to accept criticism and suggestions (Levanway, 1955). People whose positive self-concept leads them to believe that they will succeed at a task are likely to behave in ways that ultimately lead to success. The gap between a person's self-concept and his or her actual experiences is a chronic source of anxiety and can even result in mental

disorder.

Self-esteem is another way of viewing self-concept: a person with high self-esteem has a positive self-concept, while a person with low self-esteem has a negative self-concept. Children with low self-esteem have less self-confidence and develop feelings of inferiority. A child who has been severely restricted, criticised, blamed and ridiculed or simply ignored will have low self-esteem. A child who has been given an opportunity to initiate action, who has been supported in his difficulties, who has been attended to and is considered worthy will develop high self-esteem.

## Adjustment

The concept of adjustment originated in the form of 'adaptation' in biology and was a corner stone in Darwin's theory of evolution and it was borrowed by the psychologists and renamed as 'Adjustment' to emphasize the individual's struggle to get along or survive in his or her social and physical environment. Piaget (1952) has used the term accommodation and assimilation to represent the alterations of oneself or environment as a means of adjustment.

Human beings have the highest capacities to adapt themselves to the new situations. They not only adapt to physical demands but they also adjust to social pressure of the society. The adjustment means reaction to the demands and pressures of social environment imposed upon the individual. The demand may be internal (e.g. hunger, water, oxygen, sleep etc.) or external (interaction with family, friends, teachers etc.) to whom the individual has to react.

Psychologists have interpreted adjustment from two important points of views. They are a) adjustment as an achievement which emphasizes the quality of efficiency, and b) adjustment as a process which lays emphasis on the process by which an individual adjusts to his external environment. The term adjustment in this study mostly refers to the degree of capacity by which an individual tries to cope-up with the needs of inner tensions, conflicts, frustration and simultaneously is able to bring a coordination between his inner demands and those by

the outer world.

Adjustment in school is recognised as a multi-faceted process that demands children's internal resources and prior learning, family support mechanisms, and qualities of the school environment to generate the behaviours, dispositions, and skills that are used to describe the "well adjusted child." (Harrison, 2004),

## Literature survey

The relevant literature will be reviewed to provide a backdrop for understanding the present status of research pertaining to the different variables included in the study. The analysis of the previous research provides bases for formulating hypotheses.

The topic of sex differences in self-concept has intrigued generations of psychologists and educational researchers. Despite of the considerable researches, there are still contradictory views about sex differences in self-concept and school adjustment. Some studies have shown the superiority of boys over girls, others the reverse; some have reported non-significant differences between boys and girls.

Thirtha (1982) and Sarawat (1982) in their independent studies found that students, both boys and girls of higher secondary classes differed significantly on the self concept. The girls found to score higher in self concept. But Sucha (1982) and Kale (1982) have reported in their studies that boys and girls did not differ significantly in self concept development. Subsequent studies of Vinod (1993) and Roja Rani (1995) also reported that no significant difference was observed between boys and girls in self concept though the boys mean score is high.

The effect of different kinds of schooling has been subject to many investigations, Vinod (1993) and Roja Rani (1995) found that there is no significant difference in self-concept among the students belonging to private, government and aided schools.

A study by Kamalo (1988) found that sex has a definite influence on the educational adjustment. Gupta (1978) studied that there was no significant sex difference in regard to personality adjustment among the college students. Roja Rani (1995) found that girls are having



adjustment problems than boys but the mean difference is not statistically significant.

Surekha (1993) explored that students from private and government schools differed significantly in their adjustment level. The students of government schools are having more adjustment problems than students of private schools. Roja Rani (1995) has proved that private school students are better adjusted than the government and aided school students.

### **Self-concept, adjustment problems, academic achievement and other related variables**

Self-concept is a development aspect of personality and it could be improved through improvement in academic achievement (Kamat, 1985). Self-concept is a significant predictor of academic achievement (Pathani, 1985). There is a persistent and significant relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement and the change in one which seems to be associated with change in the other (Purkey, 1970, Vinad, 1992). The expectation being that achievement would improve if the self-concept becomes more positive (Thomas, 1969). Academic achievement and adjustment are positively correlated (Rajput, 1985, Mehrotra, 1986, Surekha, 1993).

A few studies have been reported in the literature regarding the relationship between self-concept and school adjustment. One's personal and social adjustment in life is positively related to one's overall self-concept (Arul, 1972). Goswami (1978) and Sarswat (1982) have found that there is a positive significant relationship between self-concept and adjustment. Alexander and Rajendran (1992) studied that students with high self-concept are better adjusted than students with low self-concept. The relationship between self-concept and adjustment problems is negative and significant. Female students are better adjusted than male students. Similar results were also reported by Roja Rani (1995).

School and family factors; students' relation with peer, teachers and parents are important in self-concept (Kale, 1982). Self-concept is positively related with creativity, intelligence and academic achievement (Lalithamma,

1973). Marsh (1992) showed that the relationship of self-concept to school achievement is very specific. Hamachek (1995) also asserts that self-concept and school achievement are inter-related.

The present study aims to explore the sex differences and impact of type of school in self-concept and school adjustment of secondary school students, and focuses to explore the relation between measures of self-concept and school adjustment with respect to the high, average and low self-concept groups. The objectives of the study were:

- To find out whether there exists gender and type of the school differences in self-concept and adjustment problems.
- To find out whether there exists any relationship between self-concept and academic achievement.
- To study the high, average and low self-concept students with respect to their adjustment problems.

The following hypotheses were formulated on the basis of literature survey presented above:

#### *Hypothesis 1*

There is no significant difference between the boys and girls in self-concept.

#### *Hypothesis 2*

There is no significant difference between the boys and girls in adjustment problems.

#### *Hypothesis 3*

There is no significant difference between students of private and government schools in self-concept.

#### *Hypothesis 4*

There is no significant difference between students of private and government schools in adjustment problems.

#### *Hypothesis 5*

There is no significant relationship between self-concept and adjustment problems.

#### *Hypothesis 6*

The high, average and low self-concept groups do not significantly differ with respect to their adjustment problems.

## Methodology

### *Method and sample*

Normative survey method is used in the present research to obtain the pertinent precise information concerning the current status of phenomena and whenever possible to draw valid general conclusions from the facts discovered. The method reports us about what exists at present by determining the nature and degree of existing conditions.

The sample for the investigation was drawn from various private and government schools of Warangal city of Andhra Pradesh, a total of 120 students were selected by simple random sampling technique. The sample includes 50% each from government and private schools which comprises of 65 boys and 55 girls of IX class within the age group of 14 to 16 years.

### *Tools used in the study*

For the purpose of data collection, two instruments namely, 1. Children Self-Concept Scale (CSCS) and 2. Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS), have been adopted in the present investigation.

#### *Children Self-Concept Scale (CSCS)*

Children Self-Concept Scale (CSCS), was constructed and standardized by Dr. S. P. Aulwalia (1986), which seeks to measure the children's self-concept. For 80 items, only one score is to be awarded to each statement, either 'Yes' or 'No' as described in the manual. The maximum score for the total self-concept scale can be 80 where as the minimum score can be 0.

#### *Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS)*

Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) was constructed and standardized in India by A. K. Sinha and R. P. Singh (1984), which seeks to segregate well adjusted secondary level students from poorly adjusted students in three areas of adjustment i.e., Emotional, Social and Educational. The inventory consists of 60 items; 20 items in each area of adjustment. For 60 items, one score is to be awarded to each statement either 'Yes' or 'No' as described in the manual. The maximum score for the total adjustment inventory can be 60 whereas the minimum score can be 0.

- Emotional adjustment: High scores indicate unstable emotion. Students with low scores tend to be emotionally stable.
- Social adjustment: Individuals scoring high scores are submissive. Low scores indicate aggressive behaviour.
- Educational adjustment: Individuals scoring high are poorly adjusted with their curricular and co-curricular programmes. Persons with low scores are interested in school programmes.

### *Data collection procedure*

Permission was obtained from the headmasters and class teachers to undertake the research project in private and government schools. The investigator selected classroom with good light and ventilation for administering the tests i.e., Children Self-Concept Scale (CSCS) and Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS). Special instructions were given orally to the students to read the directions given in the booklets and then the researcher asked to read it again loudly.

### *Validity and Reliability*

While standardizing the tests, the test-constructors already established validity and reliability. However, the researcher administered the tools on a small group (N = 40) to examine the usability or practicability and reconfirm the reliability and validity of the test. The test-retest method was applied for both the tests. The calculated co-efficient of correlations (r) for self-concept and adjustment were 0.80 and 0.82 respectively, which were significant.

Validity is the quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to determine what it was designed to determine (Best, 1983). In other words, validity refers to the ability of a test to measure what it is supposed to measure. Validity is also referred to as "the extent to which the procedure actually accomplishes what it seeks to accomplish or measure what it seek to measure" (Fox, 1969). The validity of the tests was explained in the manuals. The items included in the tests were valid as they could elicit the intended information.

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Sex	1. Boys	65	47.7	7.8	1.38 <sup>#</sup>
	2. Girls	55	45.8	7.3	
Type of school	1. Private school students	60	48.8	8.3	2.65**
	2. Government students	60	45.0	7.4	

# Not Significant \*\* Significant at 0.01 level

**Table 1. Mean scores, SDs, and t-ratio of Self-concept of students in relation to their sex and type of school**

## Results

Table 1 reveals that though the boys self-concept mean score ( $M=47.7$ ) seems to be higher than girls mean score ( $M=45.8$ ) in self-concept but the t-value 1.38 indicates the difference between boys and girls is not statistically significant in their self-concept even at 0.05 level. Hence the formulated null hypothesis-1 is accepted and concluded there is no difference between boys and girls in their self-concept.

The same Table 1 is evident that the self-concept mean score of private school students ( $M=48.8$ ) is higher than the government school students ( $M=45.0$ ). The t-value 2.65 denotes significant difference at 0.01 level. Hence, the null hypothesis-2 is rejected. Therefore it can be concluded that students of private schools have higher self-concept than the students of government schools.

The Table 2 reveals that though the girls adjustment problems mean score ( $M=17.9$ ) seems to be higher than the adjustment problems of boys ( $M=16.7$ ),  $t=0.86$  indicates that the difference is not statistically significant even at 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis-3 is accepted. Therefore it is concluded that there is no difference between boys and girls in their level of adjustment problems.

The same Table 2 is evident that students of government schools have more adjustment problems ( $M=18.9$ ) than their counterparts of private school students ( $M=15.4$ ). The  $t=2.79$  ( $p < 0.01$ ) reveals significant difference between students of government and private school

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Sex	1. Boys	65	16.7	7.8	0.86 <sup>#</sup>
	2. Girls	55	17.9 <sup>&gt;</sup>	7.4	
Type of school	1. Private school students	60	15.4	7.5	2.79**
	2. Government students	60	18.9 <sup>&gt;</sup>	6.2	

# Not Significant \*\* Significant at 0.01 level  
> High Mean score indicates Lack of Adjustment

**Table 2. Mean scores, SDs, and t-ratio adjustment problems of students in relation to their sex and type of school**

S.No.	Factors	N	df	r
1	Self-concept (X)	120	118	-0.70,**
2	Adjustment (Y)	120		

Table values of  $r$  ( $df=118$ ) = 0.18 at 0.05 level and 0.23 at 0.01 level \*\* Significant at 0.01 level

**Table 3. Relationship between the Self-concept (X) and Adjustment problems (Y)**

students. While rejecting the null hypothesis, it is concluded that the students from government schools have more adjustment problems than students from private schools.

## Relationship between the students' self-concept and adjustment problems.

As stated as one of the objectives of the study, the coefficient of correlation between self-concept and adjustment problems was calculated. Table 3 shows that the co-efficient of correlation was found to be negatively correlated ( $r = -0.70$ ) and highly significant at 0.01 level. Hence the null hypothesis-5 was rejected. The negative correlation indicates that high scores in self-respect tend to accompany with low scores in adjustment which indicates better adjustment.

Further, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to see the mean differences among the three categories of High, Average and Low self-concept groups<sup>1</sup>. The ANOVA results are presented in Table 4 along with Tukey's HSD test 'mean differences' between the three groups (HS, AS and LS) and presented in the last column with an asterisk mark (\*).

Table 4 shows that the academic achievement scores of High Self-concept (HS), Average Self-concept (AS) and Low Self-concept (LS) groups were 9.4, 16.5 and 26.8 respectively. There seems to be difference in the mean scores among the groups. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) reveals that the F-ratio for these groups is 30.9 ( $p < 0.001$ ), which is highly significant. It concludes that the students belonging to high, average and low self-concept groups differ significantly with respect to their adjustment problems. Hence the null hypothesis - 6 is rejected.

<sup>1</sup>The High Self-concept (HS) group ( $N=16$ ) composed those scored above Mean + 1 SD; the Low Self-concept (LS) group ( $N=16$ ) those scored below Mean-1 SD; and the Average Self-concept (AS) group ( $N=88$ ) those scored between Mean  $\pm 1$  SD.



Self-concept Groups		Students' Adjustment Scores				
S.No.	Level of Self-concept	N	Mean	SD	F-ratio	Mean differences
1	High Self-concept (HS)	16	9.4 <	3.3	30.9***	HS AS
2	Average Self-concept (AS)	88	16.5	6.5		AS *
3	Low Self-concept (LS)	16	26.8 >	7.1		LS * *

\* Significant mean difference between groups

\*\*\* Significant at 0.001 level

< Low mean indicates better adjustment

> High mean indicates adjustment problems

Table values of F (2,117) = 3.93 at 0.05 level and 6.87 at 0.01 level

**Table 4. Mean scores, SDs, and F-ratio of Self-concept of subjects (SS) in relation to the level of students' Adjustment**

It can be concluded that the students with high self-concept (HS) are well adjusted than their counter parts of Average Self-concept (AS) and Low Self-concept (LS) groups, with the critical analysis from the Table 4 that high, average and low self-concept students scores are relatively decreasing in their adjustment problems.

## Conclusions and Discussion

The interesting observation from the study is that though the self-concept and school adjustment of the students is not influenced by their sex, the type of the school is influencing the students in self-concept and adjustment. The relationship between these variables shows that those who have low self-concept have more adjustment problems and those who have high self-concept are well adjusted in schools. The conclusions drawn from the present study reveals certain important educational implications which are useful for teachers, educational planners and administrators.

One of the benefits of a strong self-concept is the capacity to control the various parts of our emotional world in a way that provides consistency and balance to our life. A good self-concept enables a child to accept responsibility, to achieve success in school, and to grow into a productive member of society (Schenck, 1996). Self-concept continuously guards itself against loss of self-esteem, for it is this loss that produces feelings of anxiety (Purkey, 1988). Students who have a positive self-concept achieve more whereas negative self-concept detracts children from learning situation and creates a feeling of incompetence and inferiority.

The children's self-concept influences by their school adjustment and behaviour, is widely accepted in public schools (e.g. Haynes, 1990). The present study reveals that

students studying in government schools have low self-concept and more school adjustment problems when compared with private school students. This may be due to the causes of their socio-cultural and school environment, availability of resources in school, personality characteristics of students, low SES, family problems, lack of parental education, lack of nutritious food, and ill-health problems etc.,

Apart from the above causes much of the failures, wastage and unhappiness in government schools are due to the development of negative self-concepts among pupils. If teachers put an effort to change the self-concepts of students from a negative to a positive one, there will be a dramatic change in their scholastic achievement. Good mental health practices, use of positive reinforces, individualized learning will help students to develop a positive self-concept and consequently to achieve more.

Self-concept is not innate, but is developed or constructed by the individual through interaction with the environment and reflecting on that interaction. The dynamic aspect of self-concept can be modified or changed (Huitf, 2004). According to Bandura (1997) self-efficacy and self-esteem are both constructed by one's conscious reflections. It appears that educators and parents should provide experiences to the students to master rather than attempting to boost self-esteem in them directly through other means. Teachers can also influence the development of students' self-concept in a number of ways i.e., by providing the students with tasks that result in experience of success, growth of confidence and constructive outlook.

Finally, it is proved to be a fact with the evidence of the study that the adjustment of a child with his institutional environment plays a vital role in the development of a good personality as the self-concept of the child concerns with his/her future success or failure.

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Dr. Mahender Reddy Sarsani has extensive teaching experience in teaching the methods of teaching Mathematics and Computer Education for UG; Educational Statistics and Research Methodology for PG and Research Students. He was Principal and Head; the Director, Centre for Adult, Continuing Education and Extension Activities; and Chairperson, Board of Studies in Education (PG and UG) in the same University. He obtained M.Sc (Applied Mathematics), M.Ed., Mphil (Education) from Indian Universities and received his PhD from Institute of Education, University of London, UK, in the area of Educational Psychology. He also obtained PG Diploma in Computer Methods and Programming. He was awarded with the Commonwealth Academic Scholarship by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK, London (1995-98). He is the editor of the books entitled 'Creativity in Education (2005)', and 'Quality Improvement in Teacher Education' and author of 'Creativity in schools (2006)'. He may be contacted at [drmsarsani@yahoo.co.in](mailto:drmsarsani@yahoo.co.in)

